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Talking Yourself to Death : *The Rape of Lucrece*

Peter Robinson

The Rape of Lucrece has been criticised for the incoherence of its structure and the remorseless eloquence of its heroine. Ian Donaldson begins with the question 'What goes wrong [...]?' and believes Shakespeare's poem amounts neither to 'a coherent whole' nor a 'compelling human drama.'¹ Criticism of *Lucrece* had tended to presume it should have the dramatic economy and tragic heroine of a play.² In 1725, Richard Savage exclaimed of Lucrece's apostrophes: 'With this admirable Flow of Fancy, and lively Imagery does this unbounded Genius, forgetful indeed of her unfit Condition for Oratory, whom he represents as thus Copious while he is forcibly carried away by the Stream of his own charming Imagination.'³ Savage notes a failure of theatrical realism and emphasises the strong movement of the poem, its 'admirable Flow', which derives, he hints, from the poet's being ravished by his Muse. *Lucrece* does not attempt to conform to the expectations of dramatic plausibility. S. T. Coleridge found in Shakespeare's handling of the tale 'neither pathos, nor any other *dramatic* quality.'⁴ Yet read as a narrative combined with a complaint, the poem's emblematic stanzas, its addresses to Night, Time and Opportunity, its Troy picture verses may be experienced not as a display of what F. T. Prince called the poet's 'self-defeating'⁵ skill in expression, but an exploration of language's powers in the face of a complicated and contradictory predicament. That Lucrece must kill herself for the tale to have point, Shakespeare accepts, and his accounting for her suicide allows him both to prolong his labours, thus demonstrating his talents,⁶ and reveal a graver

theme: the limits of poetic powers in relieving suffering. For Shakespeare, Lucrece does not so much settle on a right course of action, or come to realise the force of one argument for death, but discovers that her attempts to expel a taint with words are self-defeating. The abundant flow of words given Lucrece, in overwhelming the original heroic action which concludes her story, presents thus a convincing analysis of violation and its aftermath. When Lucrece tries to compose a letter about what has happened, Shakespeare vividly describes a compulsively inspired writer thwarted by emotion and self-criticism:

Her maide is gone, and shee prepares to write,
First houering ore the paper with her quill:
Concept and grieffe an eager combat fight,
What wit sets downe is blotted straight with will.
This is too curious good, this blunt and ill,
Much like a presse of people at a dore,
Throng her inuentions which shall go before.

(1296-1302)⁷

In *The Rape of Lucrece* Shakespeare's rhetorical figures too are 'Much like a presse of people at a dore' while his poem has been criticised both for being 'too curious good' and too 'blunt and ill'. My attempt is to give a sense to *Lucrece's* length,⁸ to see it as a process which elaborates and disperses emblems, a movement through stanzas which conjures and disposes of static formulae for the violated woman's state. It is by this momentum through impressively unsatisfactory storyings that Lucrece talks herself to death.

I

Some dozen years before the composition of Shakespeare's *The Rape of Lucrece*, Sir Philip Sidney, in his paragraph on 'poetry strictly speaking' from *A Defence of Poetry* contrasts the true poet with painters who are able to 'counterfeit only such faces as are set before them', and likens this true poet to an artist who shows 'the constant though lamenting look of Lucretia, when she punished in herself another's fault, wherein he painteth not

Lucretia whom he never saw, but painteth the outward beauty of such a virtue.⁹ Sidney's defence was posthumously published in the year after the appearance of a poem in which a woman is represented who 'punished in herself another's fault'; yet Shakespeare did not show a 'constant though lamenting look' or 'the outward beauty of such a virtue.' Rembrandt in his Lucrece paintings of 1664 and 1666 can portray a silent suffering regard. Lucrece's story is frozen in pictures most frequently either as Tarquin assaults her, or as she is about to stab, or is stabbing herself.¹⁰ Sidney has the moral emblem of the second moment in mind. When Lucrece looks at the still, silent representation of Hecuba, she discovers the limits of the painter's art:

On this sad shadow LVCRECE spends her eyes,
And shapes her sorrow to the Beldames woes,
Who nothing wants to answer her but cries,
And bitter words to ban her cruell Foes.
The Painter was no God to lend her those,
And therefore LVCRECE swears he did her wrong,
To giue her so much grieve, and not a tong.

(1456-63)

Though the poet may not be able to feign the appearance of things as vividly as the painter, yet Shakespeare is God enough to lend Lucrece her words. He is narrating a tale and must make Lucrece speak. In Shakespeare's poem she speaks volumes.¹¹

Thirty years ago F. T. Prince asserted of *Lucrece* that 'the poem, as a whole, is a failure. Shakespeare's skill in expression is self-defeating.' In particular he notes that 'Tarquin's deliberations before the crime' and 'Lucrece's endless tirades after it' are excesses which 'confuse the total impression.'¹² Yet Lucrece herself has grown aware by the end of the poem, when relating the matter of her sorrow to Collatine and her kindred, that more may be expressed with less:

Few words (quoth shee) shall fit the trespasse best,
Where no excuse can giue the fault amending.
In me moe woes then words are now depending,

And my laments would be drawn out too long,
To tell them all with one poore tired tong.

(1613-7)

Readers know better than her family and friends that her tongue may be poor and tired, for they have read the complaints which form over half her poem's length, and which have attracted widespread criticism. Prince again is eloquently brief: 'The greatest weakness of Shakespeare's Lucrece is therefore her remorseless eloquence' and 'After her violation, Lucrece loses our sympathy exactly in proportion as she gives tongue.'¹³ Is the poem too long, or its heroine too long-winded? Shakespeare's Lucrece, it should be borne in mind, is not an actable character but the occasion of an ambitious poem. J. W. Lever, however, remarks that:

Lucrece debates at some length the case for and against taking her life: the weakness is not so much in her arguments as in the nature of argument itself. Unlike Cleopatra, she is an exponent of attitudes rather than a person; the speaker of a 'tragical discourse', not the heroine of a tragedy.¹⁴

Neither of these editors conveys the poem's value as a complex example of 'agent regret'¹⁵ or 'transferred pollution'.¹⁶ Donaldson¹⁷ alludes to the latter concept which was first introduced into debate on the poem by Coppélia Kahn in her thorough essay on ideas about rape in *Lucrece*. Following Mary Douglas, whose concept it is, Kahn sees the rape as a pollution independent of intention and responsibility, concluding: 'Thus she views her chastity as a material thing, not as a moral attitude transcending circumstances.'¹⁸ Augustine in *The City of God* argues for such a transcendent chastity, but finds Lucrece's situation ambiguous.¹⁹ This has led some commentators to read Shakespeare's poem as an Augustinian attack on Lucrece's idea of Roman virtue. D. C. Allen, for example, states that 'Lucrece should have defended herself to the death, or, having been forced, lived free of blame with a guiltless conscience. Her action was rare and wonderful, but a little beyond forgiveness.'²⁰ Kahn opposes this type of reading,²¹ while Douglas's concept of transferred pollution helpfully

explains Lucrece's predicament as a woman who has, through no fault of her own, come to be stained. I attempt to apply the sense of transferred pollution to the poem's stanza form and its overall rhythmic shape. My disagreement with Kahn involves the nature of moral experience. Because Lucrece is stained according to a pollution rule, she feels responsible and guilty though she did not intend the soiling. A 'moral attitude transcending circumstances' is both disembodied and unassailable. I don't believe human beings have such experience of ethical values, though they may, of course, have such values attributed to them by others.

Lucrece has found favour with some poets. Coleridge, comparing it with *Venus and Adonis*, found its 'minute and faithful imagery' as 'inspired by the same impetuous vigor of thought, and diverging and contracting with the same activity of the assimilative and of the modifying faculties; and with a yet larger display, a yet wider range of knowledge and reflection [...]'²² As 'poetry strictly speaking', the truth of Shakespeare's *Lucrece* lies in the consequences of its 'impetuous vigor', in what Savage had earlier called its 'admirable Flow of Fancy'. The inspiration another poet found in it has recently been shown by John Kerrigan in 'Keats and *Lucrece*'. He also warns against expecting the poem to be like a play, or its main protagonist to be either a mute emblem of virtue, or, implicitly, a cohesive tragic heroine:

drawing on the conventions of the Complaint, and thus invoking a form through which women poets emerged into English, a mode in which women's powerlessness was typically transmuted into eloquence, Shakespeare allows his heroine to lament at lengths which might be felt to distort a poem called *The Rape of Lucrece*. But those words, emphasizing Tarquin's action, appear on no title-page until 1616.²³

Heather Dubrow asserted that 'the poem is characterized (and, one suspects, inspired) less by a pleasure in poetic adornment per se than by a preoccupation with the moral and psychological issues expressed through—or even raised by—such adornment.'²⁴ These recent writers on the poem disagree on the locus of Shakespeare's concern in Lucrece's complaint. For

Dubrow it is 'moral and psychological issues' expressed or raised by poetic adornment. Her second thought is a good one. Shakespeare's poem contains implicitly reflexive remarks on the efficacy and nature of its own procedures.²⁵ For Kerrigan the crucial concern is with reputation promulgated by poetic storying: 'Lucrece imagines herself misconstrued as a fable, storied in false "rhimes" and dishonoured by what she "authorised."' Everything inward and organic is discounted at this point.²⁶ I want to disagree with Kerrigan's discounting, which appears to take a part for the whole, and to lay emphasis rather on the poem's overall rhythmic implication, which explains—by way of its adornment, through fabular, moral and psychological concerns—its inherited narrative conclusion, the suicide.

If Shakespeare did draw on the conventions of the Complaint, he will have had his reasons. Lever called Lucrece 'an exponent of attitudes',²⁷ but the profusion of words she is given render the word 'exponent' far too self-aware; Prince, intuiting more deeply but failing to take his own point, feels that 'In spite of its length and over-elaboration, its apparent excess, there is indeed "something wanting" in *Lucrece*.'²⁸ Yet by setting 'apparent excess' against "something wanting", Shakespeare narrates his interest in the story to himself and his readers. *Titus Andronicus* contains a similarly daunting confrontation of lack and excess in Marcus's speech on meeting 'Lavinia, her handes cut off, and her tongue cut out, & rauisht'.²⁹ Her uncle's poetic eloquence might seem—in the terms of a theatrical realism—horribly tactless, especially in dwelling on her wounded mouth:

Alas, a crimson Riuer of warme blood,
Like to a bubling Fountaine stirde with winde,
Doth rise and fall betweene thy Rosed lips,
Comming and going with thy honie breath.

(981-4)

His poetic embroilment in her condition is, however, sharply contrasted with Demetrius's laconic dismissal of his victim: 'And so lets leaue her to

her silent walkes.' (967) Marcus explicitly raises the matter of a man voicing a woman's suffering:

Shall I speake for thee, shall I say tis so.
Oh that I knew thy hart, and knew the beast,
That I might raile at him to ease my minde.

(992-4)

He also honestly acknowledges who is benefitting from his capacity to speak; he would 'ease my minde' and, at the close of the scene, says: 'Doe not drawe backe, for we will mourne with thee, / Oh could our mourning ease thy miserie.' (1015-6)³⁰ William Empson, linking the Bard's two studies of Ovidian rape, says this about his adapting of such tales for the theatre: 'Shakespeare is always prepared to think, "Why are we interested in the story?" and then say the reason why on the stage.'³¹ The reason why, I should add, is not a particular speech or scene, but the entire drama; it is not one or more of the poem's expository stanzas, but *The Rape of Lucrece* as a whole.

Yet one problem seems to have been that *Lucrece* contains not a single reason given, but many. What's more, the reasons offered for Lucrece's rape and suicide have not satisfied readers as Empson's idea about Shakespeare's practice implies they should. Of Lucrece's violation, Muriel Bradbrook observes: 'The particular crime was so shocking that it allowed Shakespeare to leave a blank at the centre of the picture.'³² Bradbrook, who calls Tarquin's stanzas 'a first cartoon for the study of *Macbeth*', is drawn to pictorial similes. I prefer to find meaning in *Lucrece*'s music, both local and overall, its shaping a duration, an endurance. Of the proliferating arguments in Lucrece's complaint, Donaldson comments: 'Behind the lengthy rhetorical laments of the poem, one senses some uncertainty in Shakespeare's handling in particular of the principal issue of the poem, that of the proper course of action for a "dishonoured" woman to take'. Though a necessary issue within it, this is not exactly what Shakespeare's poem is about, for *Lucrece* concerns what course one such

woman did take, and it doesn't quite make sense to say as Donaldson does that Shakespeare was 'finally content to allow the story to drift down its traditional narrative course.'³³ Without that narrative course, 'the sad Dirge of her certaine ending,' (1612) there is no interest in the story to explain, for there is nothing that has to happen. It is because Lucrece will commit suicide whatever she says that there is something to explain.

Shakespeare narrates the consequences of a violent theft, where, to adopt Prince's suggestive words, Tarquin's 'apparent excess' is transformed by action into Lucrece's "something wanting". *Lucrece* is a violent yoking together of Tarquin's unreasonable want, his desire, and Lucrece's unappeasable want, her loss:

But shee hath lost a dearer thing then life,
 And he hath wonne what he would loose againe,
 This forced league doth force a further strife,
 This momentarie ioy breeds months of paine,
 This hot desire conuerts to colde disdain;
 Pure chastitie is rifled of her store,
 And lust the theefe farre poorer then before.

(687-93)

Shakespeare's phrase 'a dearer thing than life' foreshadows the tale's familiar outcome, as *The Argvment* had done before. Just as Tarquin's excessive desire leaves him poor, so Lucrece's loss effects in her an excess of grief. Shakespeare's choice of the rhyme royal stanza produces a number of analogous processes throughout the poem. The seven-line verse form contains an overbalancing, a surplus, an excess. It dramatizes the burden of Lucrece's stain as a forward movement, an overflow. It is the concept of transferred pollution given a rhythmic shape. Prince notes the significance of the chosen stanza, but confuses brevity with momentum: 'Much may depend on the speed with which the poet can carry through his discursive passages; in this respect *Venus* has the advantage, for the six-line stanza is swifter than the rhyme royal of *Lucrece*.'³⁴ The *Venus and Adonis* stanza has poise:

O how her eyes, and teares, did lend, and borrow,
 Her eye seene in the teares, teares in her eye,
 Both christals, where they viewd ech others sorrow :
 Sorrow, that friendly sighs sought still to drye,
 But like a stormie day, now wind, now raine,
 Sighs drie her cheeks, teares make thē wet againe.

(961-6)

The *Lucrece* stanza, being one line longer, tips forward after the fourth line. The balance of its quatrain is often syntactically more precarious than in the six-line stanza, introducing the excess of will, desire, or, later, grief, which flows into the fifth line, the odd rhyme, while the concluding couplet either affirms the new disordered state introduced by the fifth line, or advances to describe the next consequence of the unbalancing excess :

By this lamenting Philomele had ended
 The well-tun'd warble of her nightly sorrow,
 And solemne night with slow sad gate descended
 To ouglie Hell, when loe the blushing morrow
 Lends light to all faire eyes that light will borrow.
 But cloudie LVCRECE shames her selfe to see,
 And therefore still in night would cloistred be.

Reuealing day through euery crannie spies,
 And seems to point her out where she sits weeping,
 To whom shee sobbing speakes, ô eye of eyes,
 Why pry'st thou through my window? leaue thy peeping,
 Mock with thy tickling beams, eies that are sleeping ;
 Brand not my forehead with thy percing light,
 For day hath nought to do what's done by night.

(1079-92)

This repeated rhythmic structure, moving the narrative on, upsetting the balance of the set-pieces, gives *Lucrece*'s stained condition a temporal duration. This is why daybreak is so painful to her. It appears in the extra rhyme on 'sorrow' and 'borrow', the 'morrow' which does not appear in the verse from *Venus and Adonis*. This addition, contained within a syntactically enclosed stanza, gives Shakespeare his opportunity to provide a verbal pleasure for the reader. Pleasure is made both from the 'Flow'

that Savage admired, and its finding limits within the seven lines. This is the source of both the poem's momentum and its decorum:

"Deepe woes roll forward like a gentle flood,
Who being stopt, the bounding banks oreflowes,
Griefe dallied with, nor law, nor limit knowes. ["]

(1118-20)

The poem, though, knows limits and employs them to counter structurally the boundlessness of Tarquin's lust and Lucrece's grief. Of the two hundred and sixty-one stanzas which make up *The Rape of Lucrece*, all are closed with full stops or question marks. While some of these may be considered arbitrary and modern editors employ colons, semi-colons, or even commas, there are no cases where the syntax is suspended across the gap between stanzas.

The poet's formal involvement in the transference of self-destructive pollution is also emphasised in the repetition of reflexive pronouns. Twice in the same stanza Tarquin 'for himselfe, himselfe he must forsake'(157) and 'himselfe, himselfe confounds, betraies' (160); Lucrece—

tears the sencelesse SINON with her nailes,
Comparing him to that unhappie guest,
Whose deede hath made herselfe, herselfe detest [...]

(1564-6)

It is a part of what Coleridge called Shakespeare's 'perfect dominion, often *domination*, over the whole world of language'³⁵ that when a character is violently effected by another this violence should appear in an infection of style, a poison transmitted through the ear. Iago's power over Othello and Old Hamlet's murder are prefigured in the line 'For by our eares our hearts oft taynted be' (38). Shakespeare's early awareness of this dangerous propensity of language also suggests his technical concern about the enormous power he may have over readers and listeners.

As Donaldson notes, 'the current of the story is disturbed': this disturbance is produced not only by the overbalancing of the stanza, the

proliferation of arguments concerning the suicide, and the extended formal ploys that Lucrece adopts for expressing her suffering, but also by the inevitable hollowness that will be revealed in these attitudes and laments by the second of the two inescapable events that the poet must narrate. Yet since Lucrece does decide to commit suicide, and does so, why say that all the arguments are hollow? It is because the climax of her story does not resolve it.³⁶ Lever observes that 'Even Lucrece's resolution to take her life fails in its tragic impact.'³⁷ Kerrigan too points to a hollowness in the ending: 'Lucrece stabs herself in the closing phase of the story, but her action has none of the emotive shock we feel when, for instance, the Countess of Salisbury whips out her dagger in *Edward III*'. For Lucrece, actions speak quieter than words. As has been noted, Kerrigan sees her decisive reason for death as a self-consciousness of literary fame, emptying her of moral or psychological complexity:

Lucrece imagines herself misconstrued as a fable, storied in false 'rhimes' and dishonoured by what she 'authorised'. Everything inward and organic is discounted at this point. Instead we find what Keats underscored—fame, storying, and a desire for praise—made cruelly explicit, and formative of behaviour.

This concern with 'fame' harmonises her motivation in succumbing to the rape and in killing herself. Tarquin threatens her with the smear to her chastity of being found with 'some worthlesse slaue' and murdered by Tarquin if she does not give in to his lust. Her ill-fame will be 'cited vp in rimes, /And sung by children in succeeding times.' (524-5) Kerrigan comments 'Among Tarquin's hundreds of words, these are the ones which stick; Lucrece recalls them just before her suicide.'³⁸ Yet the story moves on beyond these stanzas before the lines in which she kills herself. The 'current' that Donaldson feels is disturbed, the poem's 'impetuous vigour' as Coleridge called it, prevents the narrative settling on any one picture of virtue or lamentation, on any one emblem of Lucrece's state.

As has been widely noted, Shakespeare inherits the disturbance of

reasons from Augustine's comments on the case of Lucrece in *The City of God*:

Sed ita haec causa ex utroque latere coartatur ut, si extenuatur homicidium, adulterium confirmetur; si purgatur adulterium, homicidium cumuletur; nec omnino invenitur exitus, ubi dicitur: "Si adulterata, cur laudata; si pudica, cur occisa?"

[But then the case is reduced to a dilemma: if the murder is less heinous, then the adultery is confirmed; if the adultery is extenuated, the charge of murder is aggravated; and there is no escape from the dilemma, when you say: "If she was made an adulteress, why has she been praised; if she was chaste, why was she slain?"³⁹] Shakespeare has his Lucrece say: 'To kill my selfe, quoth shee, alacke what were it,/ But with my body my poore soules pollution?' (1156-7) Anachronistically she acknowledges the Christian injunction against suicide. Prince notes that 'Shakespeare's whole procedure precludes historical accuracy, and we would rather have his Elizabethan interpretations of Roman character and thought than reconstructions by more scholarly minds.'⁴⁰ This preclusion of historical accuracy has consequences for Lucrece's self-debate. Once introduced, the Christian reason for her not to die must be put aside in favour of a motivation to act compelled either by arguments involving family and personal dishonour or shame, or else by states of intolerable inner confusion—organic, psychological, emblematic. Shakespeare does not care to concentrate either on Roman or Christian values singly and wholly; he allows the language of sin and guilt to mingle with that of dishonour and shame.⁴¹ The shifts in Lucrece's complaint stanzas from one argument and analogy to another find her in a groundless position, not unlike Augustine's, where 'there is no way out of the dilemma', for she, and her poem, are resolved on none of them. The poem proliferates around this problem, and its proliferation serves also to dissipate Lucrece's attempts to extenuate self-blame and relieve suffering by its formal expression. Donaldson acutely notes: 'Longing for the simplicity of action, Shakespeare's

characters find themselves entangled in a web of words.⁴² It is as if they were compiling the *OED*.⁴³

II

Study of the Lucretia case reveals reasons for a moral dilemma. Shakespeare, though, had a dramatic artist's way with reasons: he put them in the mouths of his protagonists. A further explanation for Lucrece's entanglement is offered when the poet, introducing the complaints against Night, Opportunity, Time, and Tarquin, represents her as inexperienced in shame or grief, unpractised in the management of suffering. The Shakespeare who wrote 'Honour and Beautie in the owners armes, / Are weakelie fortrest from a world of harmes' (27-8) also felt the fragility of goodness. Martha Nussbaum has explored questions about the relations of intrinsic virtue to circumstance: 'How much should a rational plan of life allow for elements such as friendship, love, political activity, attachment to property and possessions, all of which, being themselves vulnerable, make the person who stakes his or her good on them similarly open to chance?'⁴⁴ Considering too a subject's irrational parts, she notes: 'For our bodily and sensuous nature, our passions, our sexuality, all serve as powerful links to the world of risk and mutability.' Kahn suggests that 'Shakespeare questions the wisdom and humanity of making property the basis of human relationships' and also observes that 'Though Lucrece uses moral terms such as sin and guilt, she actually condemns herself according to primitive, nonmoral standards of pollution and uncleanness, in which only the material circumstances of an act determine its goodness or evil'. Kahn's idea of the moral is, as I noted earlier, disembodied. Shakespeare presents a situation where the socially-instituted concept of purity in marriage, which Lucrece radically internalises, provides her with one moral imperative, while her and her relatives' rational conviction of guilt by intention provides another. The fragility of goodness in Lucrece lies in her dilemma with regard to these conflicting criteria. The importance of Nussbaum's conception is that

it discourages us from undervaluing the significance for Lucrece of precarious and ambiguous social values, the world of risk and mutability, without which her intrinsic virtue, however shining, would lack subject matter and purpose.

The evil-doers in Shakespeare's works, though themselves brought down by compulsive circumstantial infection, are as agents often verbally and theatrically expert; the good are frequently overwhelmed and debilitated by the situations in which they find themselves:

Shee prays shee neuer may behold the day.
 For daie, quoth shee, nights scapes doth open lay,
 And my true eyes have neuer practiz'd how
 To cloake offences with a cunning brow.

They thinke not but that euerie eye can see,
 The same disgrace which they themselues behold:
 And therefore would they still in darkenesse be,
 To haue their vnseen sinne remaine vntold.
 For they their guilt with weeping will vnfold,
 And graue like water that doth eate in steele,
 Vppon my cheeks, what helpelesse shame I feele.

(746-56)

For one who is both chaste and innocent of corruptness, whose 'vnstained thoughts do seldom dream on euill' (88), virtue is doubly an undoing. Lucrece, in *The Argvment* discovered at Rome to be '*(though it were late in the night) spinning amongst her maides*', is overwhelmed by the violation that befalls her. Her eyes will reveal a guilt by crying. She is not able to separate his enforcement from her submission and finds guilt and shame in both. This is how a rape victim can feel something akin to Bernard Williams's 'agent regret', for his agents (like the 'lorry driver who, through no fault of his, runs over a child') are not intentional violators of moral laws; rather they find themselves unable completely to free themselves from all responsibility for such violations. 'We feel sorry for the driver,' Williams notes, 'but that sentiment co-exists with, indeed presupposes, that there is something special about his relation to this happening, something

that cannot be eliminated by the consideration that it was not his fault.⁴⁵ Kahn convincingly argues that 'Lucrece is wholly innocent of any provocation or complicity in the crime, therefore the stain [of rape] can not indicate her guilt.' The value of Williams's concept is that it allows a better understanding of the ways victims of misfortunes for which strictly they need not feel guilty, nevertheless believe in and act upon a sense of their own contributory responsibility. This feeling of responsibility may increase their dignity in our eyes, I believe, and would contest S. Clark Hulse's notion that 'Lucrece reaches her fullest heroic stature' when she 'is finally able to face the full diabolism of Tarquin and her own lack of responsibility for what has occurred.' The lines from Shakespeare's poem quoted above express the apparent contradiction in Lucrece's state. She feels innocent: 'my true eyes'. Yet she feels that her virtue has been lost, that a fault is hidden in her, so that her eyes would prefer that 'their unseene sinne remain vntold.' By the logic of her predicament, tears reveal guilt, but by locating the action in her eyes, over which she does not have control, she also understands herself as a passive victim, suffering the 'helplesse shame I feele.' It is 'helplesse' because she can't stop crying, and because she suspects that there is nothing that can relieve her sense of shame.

Shakespeare knew the story he had to tell, how it would reveal the hollowness of argument and attempted expiation he was composing, and included his awareness in the poem. After the formal complaints, Lucrece announces their ineffectiveness as means for expressing her suffering. She cannot rid herself of stain and self-blame by projecting them onto external causes and circumstances:

In vaine I raile at oportunitie,
 At time, at TARQVIN, and vnchearfull night,
 In vaine I cauill with mine infamie,
 In vaine I spurne at my confirm'd despight,
 This helplesse smoake of words doth me no right:
 The remedie indeede to do me good,
 Is to let forth my fowle defiled blood.

(1022-29)

Despite seeming to decide her 'remedie indeed', the contradictions working here prolong her poem for many more stanzas. She seeks ways of externalising her grief, and provides Shakespeare with occasions to display his poetic skill and insight, but in each case it is discovered that her eloquence is self-defeating. Lucrece's lack of expertise in sorrow recurs, and as a tacit cause of her eventual fate:

Like an vnpractiz'd swimmer plunging still,
With too much labour drowns for want of skill.

So shee deepe drenched in a Sea of care,
Holds disputation with ech thing shee vewes,
And to her selfe all sorrow doth compare,
No object but her passions strength renewes:
And as one shiftes another straight insewes,
Sometime her griefe is dumbe and hath no words,
Sometime tis mad and too much talke affords.

(1098-1116)

Lucrece's comparing her sorrow to that of others introduces the example of Philomele and, later, the pictures of Troy. As in *Hamlet*, where Hecuba's lament returns, Shakespeare can explore conditions of distress and moral confusion through a delay in the action afforded by 'too much talke'.⁴⁶ Yet also like *Hamlet*, the fascination of whose inconclusive self-explorations issues too in a simplifying resolve to act, Lucrece's attempts at easing her shame through identification with others must be abandoned by the poem to move it to its end: 'It easeth some, though none it euer cured, / To thinke their dolour others haue endured.' (1581-2) Even Lucrece's 'some' suggests that it has not eased her.⁴⁷ Kerrigan calls the Complaint 'a mode in which women's powerlessness was typically transmuted into eloquence';⁴⁸ Shakespeare's poem adds to this a daunting sense of eloquence's powerlessness, 'this helpelesse smoake of words', to which the poet may have been driven by the pressure of his ambition to produce '*some grauer labour*' and the brevity with which the story after Lucrece's violation could

be told: Ovid carries the tale from rape to death in twenty lines; Chaucer takes some twenty-nine. Shakespeare elaborated a process of internally-conflicting eloquence in which Lucrece herself is aware, as she tells her maid, 'Know gentle wench it small availes my mood, / If tears could help, mine own would do me good.' (1273-4) When the maid asks what the matter could be, her mistress answers with a conviction that might have been the last word on the subject:

(O peace quoth LVCRECE) if it should be told,
The repetition cannot make it lesse:
For more it is, then I can well expresse,
And that deepe torture may be cal'd a Hell,
When more is felt then one hath power to tell.

(1284-8)

Nevertheless, although 'The repetition cannot make it lesse', Lucrece is compelled, as is the poet too, it seems, to find 'means to mourne some newer way.' (1365) Critical responses to the poem from various conflicting viewpoints suggest that, as in *Hamlet*, Shakespeare's impulse to explore possibilities for speech beyond what might be thought appropriate has served to compel attention over the years. In a lively and inspired moment, Empson imagines 'the agile Bard' pondering how to revise *Hamlet*:

It was a bold decision, and probaby decided his subsequent career, but it was a purely technical one. He thought: "The only way to shut this hole is to make it big. I shall make Hamlet walk up to the audience and tell them, again and again, 'I don't know why I'm delaying any more than you do; the motivation of this play is just as blank to me as it is to you; but I can't help it.' What is more, I shall make it impossible for them to blame him. And *then* they daren't laugh."⁴⁹

Bradbrook saw 'a blank at the centre of the picture.' Empson intuits the advantages for a dramatist of not answering questions, not resolving dilemmas. Nor are the issues involved in either *Lucrece* or *Hamlet* intellectually settled by their mortal outcomes. Perhaps Shakespeare had been drawn to shutting a hole by making it big earlier in his career, when

wishing to sustain a narrative with the entangled motivations, the grief and suicide of Lucrece.

Lucrece exacts a promise from her kindred that they will revenge the wrong done to her. Then, before she names Tarquin as her ravisher and regains possession of her body and fate through suicide, Lucrece asks those gathered there some questions:

How may this forced staine be wip'd from me?

What is the qualitie of my offence
 Being constrain'd with dreadfull circumstance?
 May my pure mind with the fowle act dispence
 My low declined Honor to aduance?
 May anie termes acquit me from this chance?
 The poyson'd fountaine cleares it selfe againe,
 And why not I from this compelled staine?

(1701-8)

Once again, Lucrece's words intertwine her conflicting feelings of innocence and guilt: the 'staine' is 'forced', but she is still stained; she calls it 'my offence', though conscious of the force of 'dreadfull circumstance'; she feels the need to be acquitted from a 'chance'. Those listening to her imagine the lines to contain real questions, inviting her kinfolk and allies to make suggestions about how she can relieve her sense of shame: 'With this they all at once began to saie, / Her bodies staine, her mind vntained cleares' (1709-10). For Lucrece, though, these were rhetorical questions to be understood as expressing the implicit answer: nothing, nothing can. Her condition is irreparable.

It is true that the reply she gives to their encouragement to endure and overcome returns to the problem of her fame: 'No no, quoth shee, no Dame hereafter liuing, / By my excuse shall claime excuses giuing.' (1714-5) Versions of this reason are found in Shakespeare's sources. Painter's translation of Livy gives: 'As for my part, though I cleare my selfe of the offence, my body shall feele the punishment; for no unchast or ill woman, shall hereafter impute no dishonest act to Lucrece.' Ovid has the men

pardoning her, but then: 'Quam dixit veniam vos datis, ipsa nego.' [*'The pardon you give, I, cries she, deny.'*]⁵⁰ In Shakespeare's poem Lucrece's reply does return to what Kerrigan called 'fame, storying, and a desire for praise', but in its narration of her final words and death 'Everything inward and organic' about her state remains in motion.

The concern with reputation, with how a person is viewed by contemporaries and succeeding generations, is not to be understood in the poem as lacking an inward and organic equivalent. Shakespeare represents Lucrece's blood as tainted; he shows her mind disordered. She experiences her 'reputation', her 'fame', as a bodily condition. Immediately before she refuses the men's comfort, Lucrece's engraving tears recur: 'The face, that map which deepe impression beares / Of hard misfortune, caru'd in it with tears.' (1712-3) The stanza after her words of refusal begins:

Here with a sigh as if her heart would breake,
She throwes forth TARQVINS name: he he, she saies,
But more than he, her poore tong could not speake [...]

(1716-9)

Shakespeare's poem asserts further proof of the inwardness, the organic nature of her motivation to kill herself in the description of her shed gore. It enforces the narrative's fundamental truth that she dies because Tarquin has polluted her, and this pollution divides her within herself between a conviction that she is not to blame and a belief that she cannot entirely exculpate herself. Lucrece suffers from the regret that a helpless agent of suffering can feel, intensified by the fact that if she is partly her own dishonour's helpless agent, she is also its helpless victim:

Some of her bloud still pure and red remain'd,
And som look'd black, & that false TARQVIN stain'd.

About the mourning and congealed face
Of that blacke bloud, a watric rigoll goes,
Which seemes to weep vpon the tainted place,
And euer since as pittying LVCRECE woes,
Corrupted bloud, some waterie token showes,

And bloud vntained, still doth red abide,
Blushing at that which is so putrified.

(1742-50)

Bradbrook emphasises the emblematic elements in *Lucrece*, and points to the heraldic stanza comparing her cheeks to a shield: 'Teaching them thus to vse it in the fight, / Whē shame assaile, the red should fēce the white.' (62-3) The lines on Lucrece's shed blood recall the defences of her blushing, but they do so by emphasising that the external emblems have inward, organic equivalents, that the blot on the 'scutcheon is also an inner taint. Kerrigan takes up the heraldic theme, noting that '*Lucrece* is bound up with the Essex circle and their Sidneian world of Protestant knighthood. It makes bookish heraldry the locus of serious concerns.'⁵¹ The serious concerns find a body within the emblem. Lucrece is physically situated too in a circle and a world. Nevertheless in his narrative poem the location of the violated body in a social context includes the duration of thought, the endurance of her state through time. The restless movement of Lucrece's complaints carries Shakespeare's poem beyond any one textual location of its ideas and figures, any still picture of virtue, to the imagining of a predicament's gamut. This gamut is indeed one involving those mediations between a self and society which Kerrigan sees as the function of heraldry.

III

The heraldic theme in criticism of *Lucrece* has recently taken a freshly embattled turn. It has been found to show conclusive proof of the poem's own culpable embroilment in the stylization of male power. The stanzas on the Sack of Troy had been called by Bradbrook 'an emblem of her [Lucrece's] own state.'⁵² Lisa Jardine, in *Still Harping on Daughters*, interprets the emblem:

Male lust and female suffering unite Lucrece and Hecuba in a compelling composite image of extreme guilt: the ultimate posture for the female hero. And behind that image lurks the guilt imputed by the patriarchy to the female sex for the lust they passively arouse.

Shakespeare's poem, though, does not represent Lucrece as a figure of 'extreme guilt' throughout. It touches this idea, as it does the possibility that she is a figure of extreme innocence. Jardine also notes that 'Lucrece "frantic with grief" is, in patriarchal terms, most reassuringly the female hero.'⁵³ Yet Shakespeare's Lucrece, upsetting for her 'remorseless eloquence', also occasions a criticism of the efficacy of such frantic grieving. Equally, Shakespeare's poem begins and ends with reflections on the culpability of this patriarchy's members:

Or why is Colatine the publisher
Of that rich iewell he should keepe vnknown,
From theeuish eares because it is his owne?

(33-5)

Shakespeare then suggests that 'Perchance his bost' (36) was what prompted Tarquin's attempt, or 'Perchance that enuie of so rich a thing' (39) stimulated by Collatine's foolish pride in his wife's virtue had 'taynted' Tarquin, again an instance of circumstantial infection. After Lucrece's death, when her husband and father quarrel over the body and Brutus opportunistically seizes the dagger, Shakespeare returns to his doubts about the men in her family group:

Why COLATINE, is woe the cure for woe?
Do wounds helpe wounds, or grieffe help greuous deeds?
Is it reuenge to giue thy selfe a blow,
For his fowle Act, by whom thy faire wife bleeds?
Such childish humor from weake minds proceeds,
Thy wretched wife mistooke the matter so,
To slaie her selfe that should haue slaine her Foe.

(1821-27)

Thus appears an agent who both serves to fulfil Lucrece's desire that her violation be avenged, and one who is characterised as seizing an opportunity to triumph through another's suffering by exploiting it as a goad to action.

Yet Lucrece had also taken upon herself, felt within herself, the guilt of

her enforced acquiescence, for she had considered herself an independent agent responsible for her virtue, within a complex of social responsibilities which she herself accepted, even if it was not in what a modern reader might call her best interests:

For me I am the mistresse of my fate,
And with my trespassse neuer will dispence,
Till life to death acquit my forst offence.

(1069-71)

My hypothetical modern reader is a person who cannot feel any reason why Lucrece should kill herself, who believes that intrinsic virtue in disembodied isolation should triumph in an individual life over communal moral imperatives, cultural and posthumous self-esteem, even physical humiliation; that Lucrece's lamentable tragedy is not in her rape but her overwhelming need to die.⁵⁴ Yet, as has been pointed out, it was possible to view the story's conclusion as a triumph of virtue.⁵⁵ About this issue too Shakespeare remains equivocal, and so perhaps should we. The elaboration and ambition of *Lucrece*, its continuous shifting movement from one argument or train of thought and feeling to another, its compacting of ideas in which Lucrece sees herself as both agent and victim, prevent the poem settling into any convenient stereotype of female heroism, or emblem of virtue, or source of male reassurance. The full significance of Shakespeare's *The Rape of Lucrece* lies not in any one attitude for or against suicide, nor in any one idea about honour, shame or their survival in literary storying, nor in the set-piece passages emblematising her virtue, or taintedness, or her frantic grief. Where Sir Philip Sidney imagined for himself a static image, a picture showing 'the constant though lamenting look of Lucretia' Shakespeare, ambitious to write a long poem, found himself conceiving a process of spoliation and irreparable loss, a process whose whole explains what its parts confuse.

Another recent critic has seen this lengthy process in *Lucrece* as a showcase of 'prowess'.⁵⁶ Nancy Vickers figures Shakespeare's poem, in its

merging of the heraldic and the rhetorical, as emblematising 'the trap which description has traditionally constructed for "women"'. Through its strategy of enablement for women writers, her essay entraps men writing about rape. First Vickers considers the case of a man who would not wish to have his words associated with the language of power that can be considered emblematic of violation :

It is not without irony, then, that here a male speaker appropriates that voice in a manoeuvre that is, at least at some level, a strategy of winning favour within the world of men. It is through his humble silence, his modest rhetoric, that he would triumph over the flock of Petrarchan versifiers. Anxiously confronting the impoverished language of praise and its troubling implications the speaker who would be different confronts the threat of his own inarticulateness by espousing the female figure of silencing, the violated voice of the raped woman.

Her trap is sprung when she moves on to Shakespeare's motives in writing *Lucrece*. The closing of the theares 'compelled young playwrights to impose themselves as masters of alternative genres' she notes and concludes :

The glossy rhetorical surface of *Lucrece* — the insistent foregrounding of "display pieces" that prompted so much critical praise and blame — serves above all to demonstrate the prowess of the poet. And it is in this sense that Shakespeare moves in two directions at once: he dramatically calls into question descriptive fashion while amply demonstrating that he controls it. Entered like Collatine in a contest of skill, Shakespeare's encomium of *Lucrece* — his publication of *Lucrece* — stands as a shield, an artfully constructed sign of identity, as a proof of excellence.

For this critic the advantage of Shakespeare's 'two directions' is that he can be beaten with the stick he has put into her hand. His gesture, his poem, his shield 'remains embedded in the descriptive rhetoric it undercuts.' Vickers concludes by affirming that it is for 'women to write their way out of' the trap of traditional description. I have no quarrel with her aspirations for women writers. Yet for Vickers it remains to women to take up this task because she has argued the impossibility of men writing about rape with motives that are other than suspect or self-serving. By

her lights Shakespeare's poem, which had provided the critic with a complex diagnosis of various symptoms of male pride, vanity, cruelty, stupidity and conceit, finally succumbs to the disease itself.⁵⁷ The poet, despite his power to undercut (that over-used word), is hardly better than Collatine.

Nor would Shakespeare have been advised to write a poem of dumb eloquence in the style of Philomel,⁵⁸ as it were, for that would have been to appropriate or espouse 'the voice of the raped woman'. Yet the problem of strategy in Vickers's exclusive argument, by which the male speaker cannot be praised, is that by the same token he cannot be blamed. This is the case with any catagorically exclusive argument, attributing praise or blame to intentional actions, founded on discriminations (and gender is one) for which the individuals involved cannot be held entirely responsible. While her account of the poem's 'rhetorical display-pieces' does indeed thoroughly and convincingly read them as inscribed with 'the relationship between sex and power', her stance vis-à-vis a man writing a poem about a rape is inadvisable both for the male poet and for the active feminist. The former, narrating a case of violation perpetrated by one of his own sex, is compelled to deploy his art to metamorphose it into something else, to make something instructive and pleasurable out of a nightmare.

It might be contested that the idea of making something educatively enjoyable out of another's pain is already despicable. Yet there is nothing else that a writer can do with pain and death, except being moralistically or ideologically appropriative of it, which may, to some, seem hardly better, and possibly worse. For the active feminist it may be a poor strategy to conduct arguments which make it abstractly impossible for male writers to achieve what they can in their contexts without incurring an automatic measure of blame for their own general culpability as belonging to one of the two sexes, for being men in a man's world. By such arguments real traps in which particular women may encounter specific physical or descriptive denigration have been abstractly defeated by an all exclusive

logic. By contrast, a woman writer may find herself with a freedom to speak unbounded by any of the considerate constraints that would quieten men.⁵⁹ The appropriation of suffering voices, for example, may be as much a dubious action for an engaged poet or critic of either sex. The ethical issues that bear upon treatment in writing of others' sufferings are, I am suggesting, as applicable to women as men, to poets and critics alike.⁶⁰

Shakespeare, as Vickers's essay notes, was writing narrative poems in a situation where he needed patronage. His dedicatory epistles to Southampton have the marks of modesty and tactful self-advertisement that may be associated with a skillful Englishman entering a marketplace.⁶¹ Vickers affirms that she is describing a situation where 'human beings have become an exchange value'.⁶² Yet there are degrees of blameworthiness and it is in Vickers's own interests as a modern polemical scholar not to be understanding of the poet's position in the 1590s with regard to patron and readers. Shakespeare may have been intending to display his 'Flow of Fancy'; he may have wanted to counter the attack of a rival poet;⁶³ he may have needed to win some of the 'welth'⁶⁴ that friendship with Southampton may have brought. However, if he was only trying to show off his skills, gain a literary advantage or financial reward, then it seems unlikely that he would have produced a poem which is able four hundred years later to engage critics in debates about the meanings, social, political, psychological and sexual, of images by which he retold a famous tale of rape and suicide. Perhaps I am simply reversing the direction of the 'undercut'. The relationship of sex and power which the poem amply demonstrates and explores remains firmly criticised by *Lucrece*, while its rhythmic dynamics both explain the force of the predicament in which the violated woman finds herself and provide the reader with a 'half-consciousness of unsubstantial existence over the whole composition', a superaddition of rhythmic pleasure by which the 'more pathetic situations' may be endured and enjoyed.⁶⁵ If this were not so, then 'the less Shakespeare he!'⁶⁶

Towards the end of the last century a German critic, Louis Lewes, in his book *The Women of Shakespeare*, commented of *Lucrece* that 'its merits suffer by comparison with its classical source, the tale as given by the ancient Roman historian Livy, of whom Niebuhr said, "Who after Livy can tell the tale of the despair of Lucretia?"'. Following a lengthy citation from Shakespeare's source, he compares the images of women presented :

The truly tragic impression that all must experience who read this passage arises from the character of Lucretia as depicted by the Roman historian. The sorrow of this woman is incurable, but in her pain, her despair, she never loses self-composure, she never hesitates as to the path she must tread, and she enters on this path with exalted strength of soul, after obtaining, through the oath taken by the men, the certainty that her shame and its consequences, her voluntary death, will not remain unavenged. Shakespeare, in his presentation of Lucretia, has entirely obliterated her antique character. The Roman heroine becomes in his hands a modern, philosophising, sentimental lady, whose words flow so abundantly that her heroic action is almost overwhelmed by their rush.⁶⁷

Here, in stark contrast, is an emblem of virtue and a woman with a tongue in her head. The many contradictions of *Lucrece's* predicament result in neither heroism nor tragedy as understood by some criticism and scholarship. Like Artemisia Gentileschi's *Lucretia* of c. 1621 and Rembrandt's second version of 1666, Shakespeare's *Lucrece* makes contact with the isolation and inner torments of a victim who feels responsible for the consequences of what befalls her. Furthermore, in revealing through their deployment the limits of conventional forms and arguments, Shakespeare carries his heroine, his readers, and, importantly, himself into contemplating more thoroughly the outcome of finding yourself pleading in—

[...] a wilderness where are no lawes,
To the rough beast, that knowes no gentle right,
Nor ought obayes but his fowle appetite.

(544-6)

In his version of *The Rape of Lucrece*, Shakespeare, though the later critical history of his poem doesn't always support or seem aware of the fact, was

also helping to transform the literary situation that Sidney in his world of Protestant knighthood and *A Defence of Poetry* had characterised for the 1580s: 'And now that an overfaint quietness should seem to strew the house for poets, they are almost in as good a reputation as the mountebanks at Venice.'⁶⁸

Notes

This essay began as a seminar paper for a private study group organized by Eric Griffiths in 1980. A draft was delivered at the Japan Shakespeare Society Conference in 1989. My thanks there are due to Shoichiro Sakurai. I would also like to thank John Kerrigan, Rosemary Laxton, and John Roe for their advice, encouragement and help in writing and revising the paper.

- 1) Ian Donaldson, *The Rapes of Lucretia: A Myth and its Transformations* (Oxford, 1982) p. 40.
- 2) For a summary of critical debate about the poem up to F. T. Prince's edition (1960), see J. W. Lever's contribution to 'Twentieth-century Studies in Shakespeare's Songs, Sonnets, and Poems' *Shakespeare Survey* 15, ed. A. Nicoll (Cambridge, 1962) pp. 22-5. For an outline of more recent criticism, see John Roe, 'Introduction' to *Shakespeare: The Poems* (Cambridge, 1991).
- 3) *Shakespeare: The Critical Heritage* ed. B. Vickers vol. 2, 1693-1733 (London and Boston, 1974) p. 424.
- 4) S. T. Coleridge, *Biographia Literaria* 2 vols. ed. J. Shawcross (Oxford, 1907, corrected edn., 1954) 2, p. 19.
- 5) F. T. Prince, 'Introduction' to *The Poems* ed. F. T. Prince (London, 1960) p. xxxiv.
- 6) Nancy Vickers identifies the poet's labours with Collatine's male boasting by emphasising Shakespeare's poetic purpose as one of social conquest in "'The blazon of sweet beauty's best": Shakespeare's Lucrece', *Shakespeare and the Question of Theory* ed. P. Parker and G. Hartman (London and New York, 1985) p. 108-9. I return to this debate.
- 7) Citations of *The Rape of Lucrece* and other of Shakespeare's works are from Stanley Wells, Gary Taylor et. al., *William Shakespeare: The Complete Works*, Original-Spelling Edition (Oxford, 1986) and identified by line references in parentheses. Shakespeare's play on 'wit' and 'will' in relation to writing may echo a famous passage on poetic creation in Sidney's *A Defence of Poetry*: 'our erected wit maketh us know what perfection is, and yet our infected will keepeth us from reaching unto it.' *Miscellaneous Prose of Sir Philip Sidney* ed. K. Duncan-Jones and J. Van Dorsten (Oxford, 1973) p. 79. Duncan-Jones believes that Sidney's *Defence* 'may conceivably have been known to the young Shakespeare in manuscript', *Shakespeare: A Bibliographical Guide*, new edition, ed. S. Wells (Oxford, 1990) p. 72. The 'wit' and 'will' collocation is a commonplace and Shakespeare is likely to have encountered it in *Astrophel and Stella*, 4: 'thou setst a bate betweene my will and wit', *The Poems of Sir Philip Sidney* ed. W. A. Ringler, Jr. (Oxford, 1962) p. 166. Newman's unauthorised edition of the sonnets with Nashe's preface had appeared in 1591. If there is a double-entendre in the 'erected'-'infected' play, then it is the more grimly apt for Lucrece's wretched state. The Argument, as has been widely noted, differs from the poem in suggesting that 'Lucrece in this lamentable plight, hastily dispatcheth Messengers [...]' (p. 270). The effect of the various discrepancies

between argument and poem is to suggest that the latter is a variation on a famous story which forms a commentary by means of its elaborated differences.

- 8) *The Rape of Lucrece* is over a third as long again as *Venus and Adonis*. Shakespeare, doubtless aware of the fact, seems to be making some jokes about it in his dedicatory epistle. His love for Southampton is 'without end'; his poem 'without beginning' (because it does not include the chastity wager outlined in *The Argvment*) is 'but a superfluous Moity.' Finally the poet returns to his witticism by wishing the patron 'long life still lengthned with all happinesse.' (Wells and Taylor, p. 270)
- 9) Sidney, p. 81.
- 10) See Donaldson, pp. 13-20 and Mary D. Garrard, *Artemisia Gentileschi: The Image of the Female Hero in Italian Baroque Art* (Princeton, N. J., 1989) pp. 210-244. It is noteworthy that in the Troy Picture stanzas, Shakespeare is interested in the imitation of action, how a still picture can pretend to movement. See II. 1408-28.
- 11) For further discussion of the two arts in relation to Shakespeare's poem, see S. Clark Hulse, "A Piece of Skilful Painting" in Shakespeare's "Lucrece", *Shakespeare Survey* 31, ed. K. Muir (Cambridge, 1978) pp. 13-22. His treatment, while usefully exploring relations between the poem, painting, and Renaissance art theory, takes little account of the poem as a sequence of representings and its conclusion about the poem's heroine disregards statements made by Lucrece at the end of the Troy picture stanzas and is, as I discuss later, morally simplistic.
- 12) Two references to Prince, pp. xxxiii-iv and xxxv.
- 13) Prince, p. xxxvi.
- 14) J. W. Lever, 'Introduction' to *The Rape of Lucrece* ed. J. W. Lever (Harmondsworth, 1971) p. 27-8.
- 15) See the discussion of 'agent regret' in Bernard Williams, *Moral Luck: Philosophical Papers 1973-1980* (Cambridge, 1981) p. 27-8.
- 16) See Mary Douglas, *Purity and Danger: An Analysis of Concepts of Pollution and Taboo* (London, 1966) pp. 127-30.
- 17) Donaldson, p. 23.
- 18) Coppélia Kahn, 'The Rape in Shakespeare's Lucrece', *Shakespeare Studies* IX ed. J. Leeds Barroll III (Knoxville, Tenn., 1976) p. 60.
- 19) See Augustine, *The City of God against the Pagans* 7 vols. trans. G. E. McCracken (London, 1957; 1981 rpt.) 1, pp. 82-3; Kahn, pp. 62-3; and Donaldson, pp. 28-33.
- 20) D. C. Allen, 'Some Observations on The Rape of Lucrece', *Shakespeare Survey* 15, p. 91.
- 21) See Kahn, p. 69, n. 1, para. 2.
- 22) Coleridge, op. cit., 2, p. 19.
- 23) John Kerrigan, 'Keats and Lucrece' in *Shakespeare Survey* 41 ed. S. Wells (Cambridge, 1989) p. 114. Though it had earlier been made by Prince (pp. xii-

- xiii and xvii), Kerrigan may have drawn this point from Kahn who notes that 'the poem's original title is simply *Lucrece*; *The Rape of Lucrece* was an addition by the editor of the 1616 quarto.' (p. 46) It is worth considering, though, that in the Stationers' Register for 9 May 1594 is listed 'a booke intituled / the Ravyfhement of Lucrece' and that 'The Rape of Lucrece' is the running title on every page in the 1594 edition and 'probably stood in the manuscript.' See Wells, Taylor et. al., *William Shakespeare: A Textual Companion* (Oxford, 1987) p. 265.
- 24) Heather Dubrow, *Captive Victors: Shakespeare's Narrative Poems and Sonnets* (Ithaca and London, 1987) p. 84.
 - 25) There are references to imagination, writing, speaking, authorship, books, and reading at ll. 449, 561-7, 1016-1122, 1195, 1245, 1253, 1322 and 1498.
 - 26) Kerrigan, p. 115.
 - 27) Lever, p. 28.
 - 28) Prince, p. xxxv.
 - 19) Stage direction, *Titus Andronicus* 2, 4.
 - 30) For further discussion of issues here, see Albert H. Tricomi, 'The Aesthetics of Mutilation in *Titus Andronicus*', *Shakespeare Survey* 27, ed. K. Muir (Cambridge, 1974) pp. 12-13, and Ann Thompson, 'Philomel in "Titus Andronicus" and "Cymbeline"', *Shakespeare Survey* 31, pp. 29-30.
 - 31) William Empson, 'The narrative poems' in *Essays on Shakespeare* ed. D. Pirie (Cambridge, 1986) p. 7.
 - 32) Two references to Muriel Bradbrook, *Shakespeare and Elizabethan Poetry: a Study of his Earlier Work in Relation to the Poetry of the Time* (London, 1951) p. 115 and 112.
 - 33) Two references to Donaldson, p. 56.
 - 34) Prince, p. xxxv, n. 3.
 - 35) Coleridge, op. cit., 2, p. 19.
 - 36) Bradbrook felt that in this poem 'Tragedy is something that slaps you in the face: it is tragedy in the newspaper sense.' (p. 115) Prince goes further: 'This is indeed a conception of tragedy which is not only youthful, but vulgar; it is crude in its craving for sensation, and vulgar because the physical suffering is over-emphasised.' (p. xxxvii) The word, its plural, adjectival or adverbial form appears once only in *Lucrece* where night is described as a 'Blacke stage for tragedies' (766).
 - 37) Lever, p. 27.
 - 38) Three references to Kerrigan, pp. 117 and 115 (twice).
 - 39) Augustine, op. cit., 1, pp. 86-9.
 - 40) Prince, p. 119n.
 - 41) The raw statistics, from Martin Spevack, *The Harvard Concordance to Shakespeare* (Hildesheim, 1973), are as follows: shame 31, shame's 1, shames 1, shaming 1; sin 16, sin-concealing 1; guilt 5, guiltless 3, guilty 13; soul 10, soul's 2, souls 4; stain 8; blame 7; spot 1, spotless 1. They perhaps suggest that while

- Shakespeare's emphasis is on a Roman shame, he includes enough of the vocabulary of Christian morality significantly to confuse the issues.
- 42) Donaldson, p. 43.
 - 43) Donaldson is perhaps accidentally alluding to James Murray's labours. See K. M. Elizabeth Murray, *Caught in the Web of Words: James A. H. Murray and the Oxford English Dictionary* (New Haven and London, 1977). Given the number of references to Shakespeare in Johnson's Dictionary, it is perhaps not entirely fanciful to see his characters as formatively contributing to the definition of the English Language as they experience the strains of speech in complex predicaments.
 - 44) Two references to Martha C. Nussbaum, *The Fragility of Goodness: Luck and Ethics in Greek Tragedy and Philosophy* (Cambridge, 1986) pp. 6-7; Kahn, pp. 56, 49.
 - 45) Williams p. 28; Kahn, 48; Hulse, p. 18.
 - 46) Garrard makes this comparison, p. 237.
 - 47) Hulse believes that in the Sinon stanzas of the Troy painting 'It is in looking at the painting, in examining by comparison the woes of Hecuba, that Lucrece is finally able to face the full diabolism of Tarquin and her own lack of responsibility for what has occurred' (p. 19). It is, he thinks, 'In that moment of recognition, Lucrece reaches her fullest heroic stature.' (p. 20) Hulse, however, neither notes Lucrece's comments on Helen ('Shew me the strumpet that began his stur, / That with my nailes her beautie I may teare' ll. 1471-2) nor the lines in which Lucrece acknowledges that the analogy of Troy with her own state has not eased or cured.
 - 48) Kerrigan, p. 115.
 - 49) 'Hamlet' in op. cit., p. 84.
 - 50) William Painter, *The Pallace of Pleasure* (1566); Ovid, *Fasti* Bk. 2, 1. 830; trans. John Gower (1640); cited from *Narrative and Dramatic Sources of Shakespeare* 5 vols. ed. G. Bullough (New York and London, 1957) 1, pp. 198, 192 and 195.
 - 51) Kerrigan, p. 107. The inwardness of the heraldic blot is also something Tarquin ponders: 'Then my digression is so vile, so base, / That it will liue engrauen in my face.' (201-2)
 - 52) Bradbrook, p. 112.
 - 53) Two references to Lisa Jardine, *Still Harping on Daughters: Women and Drama in the Age of Shakespeare* (Brighton, 1983) p. 193.
 - 54) Kahn is one such when she states unequivocally, 'The tragedy is that only by dying is she able to escape from marginality and regain her social and personal identity as a chaste wife.' p. 62.
 - 55) Geoffrey Chaucer, for instance: 'She sayde that, for hir gylt, ne for hir blame, / Hir housbonde shulde nat have the foule name, / That nolde she nat suffren by no wey.' Bullough, p. 188.
 - 56) This and the following five citations are from Nancy Vickers, op. cit., pp. 109,

112, 98, 108-9, 112 and 113n.5. Hulse had earlier suggested that the men's appropriation of Lucrece's death for political ends is paralleled in the relation between the poet and his patron: 'It is Brutus who directs the response of the audience to the story of Lucrece, pointing out to the Romans their proper course of action, pointing out to Southampton the artistry of his servant Shakespeare.' (p. 22).

- 57) In Shakespeare's defence, see Kahn, pp. 67-8.
- 58) For a twentieth-century instance of this strategy, see Philip Larkin, 'Deceptions', *Collected Poems* ed. A. Thwaite (London, 1988) p. 32. 'I would not dare / Console you if I could. What can be said [...]?'
- 59) Consider as a possible instance, Adrienne Rich's poem 'Rape', *Diving into the Wreck: Poems 1971-2* (New York and London, 1973) pp. 44-5 in which shock tactics are deployed to criticise the sexism of a policeman:

And so, when the time comes, you have to turn to him,
 the maniac's sperm still greasing your thighs,
 your mind whirling like crazy. You have to confess
 to him, you are guilty of the crime
 of having been forced.
- 60) For anyone interested in the academic politics of these matters, see *Men in Feminism* ed. A. Jardine and P. Smith (New York and London, 1987).
- 61) In the *Venus and Adonis* epistle Shakespeare writes of 'my vnpolisht lines' and hopes that 'your Honour seeme but pleased'. If Southampton expresses pleasure, the poet will honour him with 'some grauer labour' (Wells and Taylor, p. 254). Presumably the patron was pleased, for Shakespeare refers to 'The warrant I haue of your Honourable disposition' (p. 270) and the tone to the *Lucrece* dedicatory letter, as I implied earlier in note 8, has a more banteringly intimate, modest appeal. Bradbrook thought that the Dedication to *Venus and Adonis* 'is at once disarming and "gentle", the tone courtly but unaffected. This could not be calculated; it is the natural consequence of that civility of demeanour which Chettle had so admired.' See 'Beasts and Gods: Greene's *Groats-worth of Witte* and the social purpose of *Venus and Adonis*', *Shakespeare Survey* 15, p. 71.
- 62) Vickers, p. 115, n. 34.
- 63) See Bradbrook, 'Beasts and Gods', pp. 62-71.
- 64) The allusion is to sonnet 29's couplet: 'For thy sweet loue remembred such welth brings, / That then I skorne to change my state with Kings.' John Barrell's essay 'Editing Out: the discourse of patronage and Shakespeare's twenty-ninth sonnet', in *Poetry, Language and Politics* (Manchester, 1988) pp. 18-42, discusses the poet's economico-linguistic situation. The sonnet's couplet may perhaps be associated with a reversal of its relations between social standing and envy in *Lucrece*, ll. 39-42.
- 65) I am alluding to Wordsworth's discussion of the function of metre in 'Preface to *Lyrical Ballads*' in William Wordsworth, *The Poems*, 2 vols. ed. J. O. Hayden (Harmondsworth, 1977) 1, p. 885.

- 66) Robert Browning, 'House', *The Poems*, 2 vols. eds. J. Pettigrew and T. J. Collins (Harmondsworth, 1981) 2, p. 439.
- 67) Two references to Louis Lewes, *The Women in Shakespeare* trans. H. Zimmern (London, 1894) pp. 69 and 73.
- 68) Sidney, p. 110.